



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII  
TO THE 7th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION\***

*Sala del Concistoro - Martedì, 8 dicembre 1953*

It is a fact that, despite the improvements gained in recent times, the problem of food remains crucial for a large part of humanity. As you state in your reports, the current situation of the world from the agricultural viewpoint is characterized by an accentuated imbalance between the developed areas and the insufficiently developed countries. On one hand production is growing rapidly, levels of consumption are rising, exports are increasing; while on the other hand, in the Far East most particularly, production remained weak, food deficient, and imports limited. The possibility of famine and of its terrible consequences does not cease to haunt millions of people and a period of drought suffices to release this fearful scourge. But furthermore, it is necessary also to take account of the steady rise in the population which requires, at the risk of seeing things go from bad to worse, a parallel growth in consumer goods.

Your organization takes upon itself to face this difficult situation, and to engage in a decisive struggle worldwide to suppress the sufferings and the threats which still today weigh on so many unfortunate people. What courage it requires to dare calmly to envisage an undertaking which without exaggeration can be called gigantic; and to give oneself to it with ardor, when it seems to grow more complex in direct proportion to one's attachment to it. But you, animated by a zeal which nothing seems to tire, have succeeded in the first place in assuring yourselves an indispensable basis of work, obtaining the necessary information on the agricultural production and exchanges of the various countries. In many cases, in order to procure for yourselves precise indications, it has been necessary to train experts and initiate them in modern statistical methods. You have thus brought together valuable materials which will render great service to the economists.

The essential part of your work consists of intervening effectively in the domain of agriculture, but

also of fisheries and of forest exploitation. Without doubt efforts will be made to direct toward the undernourished peoples, which represent 70% of the world population, the excess production of the more favoured countries, thereby assuring them stable outlets. But it is much more urgent to provide for the increased productivity of those very places where famine is felt. For that, you want first to reduce the sometimes considerable losses due to the inexperience of the growers, and due to epidemics; then to raise yields by improvement of the methods of cultivation, by the use of fertilizers, by the choice of plant species; and finally you are looking toward bringing into use areas still uncultivated, especially by means of irrigation. In all of this, the phases of realization are necessarily preceded by investigations and detailed studies to evaluate the possibilities of success and to avoid the heavy consequences of errors. Let us mention equally, as an example of the cultural impact of your efforts, the task given to you by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, to put into effect an increased production of paper.

This program, so varied and so broad, certainly raises unusual difficulties. Perhaps the most delicate, you have surely noticed, will consist in creating social conditions which will enable the workers to whom you will be furnishing aid and advice, to acquire a taste for their task, become interested in it, and exploit to the fullest the resources which will be provided to them. It is useless in effect to put in place experts to teach new methods and to perfect the mechanical equipment, if the human conditions in which man moves prevent him from obtaining from his effort the fruit he has a right to expect from it. To arouse interest and personal initiative, to show that the good of the community will not be realized at the expense of the good of individuals but rather to their profit. and to see to it that progress is thereby achieved, this certainly is a capital element of success. Thus, your economic work doubles itself with a social value that is not less decisive and which we love to emphasize. This is why we, desirous of demonstrating to you our support in this enterprise. have wished recently to bring our contribution in favor of the program for extending technical assistance to various countries, especially to the least fortunate regions.

In spite of the still limited resources of your organization, you have not hesitated to interest in it all people, who are avid not only to perfect themselves and to obtain economic advantages but also to bring their help to those less fortunate. An action of this sort, as we remarked in an address pronounced on the 21st of February 1948 in circumstances similar to these, obliges nations to feel themselves mutual beneficiaries and benefactors of one another.

The civilized world looks with a profound sadness at pitiful pictures of victims of famine when the earth is capable of feeding all mankind. To suppress definitively such a wound certainly merits some sacrifice and justifies austere dedication. Was not Christ concerned to satisfy the hunger of the crowds which were following him? Did He not teach to His disciples the prayer which asks of God our daily bread? In pursuing the goal which you have set yourselves, you are realizing without any doubt an intention dear to Him who consecrated Himself to the salvation of humanity. That is why we wish that you may continue your task without weakening. It is no doubt only at its start, but already experience has taught you much; your tools are perfecting themselves, your credit is

growing among governments who are appreciating more and more the usefulness and the fruits of your action. If the final term is not yet in view, at least you can hope that a wider comprehension and a more active collaboration will come to re-enforce and multiply the results obtained and to guarantee a more rapid further development.

We wish this for you with all our heart, at the same time that we call down upon you, your families and upon all who share in your labor the most abundant blessings of Heaven.

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*\*Paths to Peace* p.296-297.